

The Second Nature in Augustine and Pascal

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Received: 03 Nov 2021,

Received in revised form: 11 Dec 2021,

Accepted: 18 Dec 2021,

Available online: 27 Dec 2021

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Keywords — *Anthropological, Original Sin,
Second Nature, The Fall.*

Abstract — *This article aims to show that the theme of second nature is central in Augustine and Pascal's thoughts, it is also the foundation of their anthropological reflection that the Bishop of Hippo develops from his researches on the origin of evil while the Jansenist reacts against to rationalist pretensions in the 17th century. We prove how the concept of second nature allows these authors the presentation possibilities of man within a historical-temporal context, considering different social and human cultural issues. It begins at thematic such as the fall and the original sin; Augustine as much as Pascal carries these categories from a theological plan to a context of reason which both thinkers transform in hypothesis for basing current status or after the fall. Thus, Augustine and Pascal give to us a reflection about the human condition in a standard that submits itself neither to fideism nor to rationalism, they set up their anthropological perspectives balancing faith and reason, through this standard analysis.*

I. INTRODUCTION

We can note in Augustine as well as in Pascal's thoughts the effort of justifying theological elements as categories that formed the basis for both authors developing their analysis on the human being. Consequently, these elements are no longer only theological since they perfectly adjust themselves to the rational context. In this work, it concentrates on the second nature which in the Bishop of Hippo and in the Jansenist have as scenario the fall and the original sin according to biblical narrative.

The second nature substantiates itself in the finitude of human existence context that is the current place of our condition which historical and contradictory situation emphasizes. In this scenario are all the human faculties as well as all the constructs that come from their creativity. Hence, these circumstances that are results of the Adamic fall acts as the basis of every political, historical, and philosophical reflection in addition to every scientific

development. We can constantly observe, thus, in both authors, theological elements transition, namely, items of faith as the philosophical premises for analyzing the human condition.

Therefore, it uses these biblical categories, such as the fall and the original sin, for Augustine and Pascal, each in their own way, could develop analyses that come out from theological space to anthropological field; and, since the moment in which these categories overcome their place of origin, they get legitimacy within the space of rationality when are applied in the anthropological perspective.

It is important to note that both Augustine and Pascal, despite using the same categories in the human condition analysis, start from different interests. As the Bishop of Hippo responded to the Manicheans and Pelagians, both positions presented different anthropological approaches, with which Augustine held exhaustive debates; the Jansenist thinker reacted, on other hand, to the humanism of the 17th century, especially when it was embodied in

Cartesian rationalism and Molinist theology that the Company Of Jesus adopted.

Throughout this research, we address the anthropology in Augustine, who developed it in many debates and deep analysis, considering as a basis the third chapter narrative from the book of Genesis in which the doctor of grace found through the Adamic fall and the original sin assumptions that are important to his study on the human condition. Subsequently, the article demonstrates the same assumptions in Blaise Pascal's anthropology that exhibits the Bishop of Hippo precedence in the French thinker, however, with this last one included in a new context.

II. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE SECOND NATURE IN AUGUSTINE

In the fourth century of the Christian era, there were fierce debates about the origin of evil this subject was also absorbed by questions involving human nature. The historical and geographical context marked by the Roman Empire's presence was already freely occupied by religion, which without persecution could develop itself.

During this period, Augustine excelled in lengthy debates with Manicheans and Pelagians that, within the analysis of evil, also included anthropological issues. Already introduced to Greek-Latin philosophical thought, the young Augustine entered his studies with the Manicheans searching for answers to the evil problem and, as a result, he was not satisfied with this solution. Continuing the search for this truth, he ended up converting himself to Christianity. Thereafter, he made use of Greek philosophy, with an apologetic effort, covering it with the Christian faith, which reflects in his anthropology. As Vaz (1991) commented, this anthropology, which consists in the Platonic tradition transposition into the fundamental themes of the biblical and Christian tradition from the previous patristic, was the reference for the medieval conception of man, which influenced Western anthropological thought until our days. Furthermore, it is important to note that the break with Manichaeism was of paramount importance for Augustinian anthropology.

The Manicheans with whom Augustine had contact, in their studies on the origin of evil, saw this issue also through an anthropological perspective, while they conceived man as a being of soul and body, they aimed to prove that these two parts were antagonistic; in other words, evil and good were represented by the body and the soul where the body, the material side was the territory of evil, and the soul, the immaterial side of man, was where the good was located. Hence, Manicheism attributed a material origin to evil. Augustine, however, did not receive this teaching with pleasure, since, according to his

understanding, the matter is the work of God's hands. Adopting the biblical perspective, then, the African thinker opposes the Manichean perspective, stating that all things created have their origin in God, who created them, as a result, all nature cannot exist except through him and it is a well, although he does not take part in it. This justifies, such as, why God is changeless and created things that are changeable.

Thus, the Bishop of Hippo reacts to the Mani's sect perspective, which deposits all the origin of evil in the matter and affirms that its condition of mutability is the reason for its residence and transmission. For Augustine, in contrast, as the matter is the product of God's creation, affirming it as the seat of evil is blasphemous by the reason of, according to the Scriptures, everything that God made was good.

Considering this, we cannot find evil within the mutability conditions of nature, as doing this means blasphemies God, since if evil dwells in matter, God would be responsible for it which the Augustinian thought does not admit. In this regard, evil must have another explanation that is disconnected from nature or from the continuous mutability of matter.

For Augustine, evil is good deprivation, and this is set as distancing from God. As such, there is no harm when God's creation complies its purpose with its creator. However, by deviating from the divine purpose, the creature corrupts its formerly good and perfect condition. Therefore, Augustine (n.d., para. 6) demonstrates this understanding of evil:

When accordingly it is inquired, whence is evil, it must first be inquired, what is evil, which is nothing else than corruption, either of the measure, or the form, or the order, that belong to nature. Nature therefore which has been corrupted, is called evil, for assuredly when incorrupt it is good; but even when corrupt, so far as it is nature it is good, so far as it is corrupted it is evil.

Evil is the being corruption, this reveals itself in mode, species, or order, and when there are ruptures in this ontological field, evil is established. Thus, Augustine hopes to find the answer to the evil problem, as a result, he reacts against the Manichean proposal of asserting that evil is in the imperfection of the sensible world which makes the Creator responsible for the creature's defect. Starting from the analysis of nature, the *Confessions* author's intends to reach the human condition and he begins with the understanding that evil does not originate itself in matter or in nature, he tries to present a new place for the

origin of evil, namely: the problem of evil is now considered a problem of moral order.

Therefore, a wanton will is the cause of all evils. If the will were in accordance with nature, surely it would maintain the nature and not be destructive of it; hence it would not be wanton. Accordingly, we may conclude that the root of all evils is not being in accordance with nature, which is a sufficient rejoinder to all those who want to lay the blame on natures. (Augustine, 2010, p. 107)

Consequently, evil in Augustine is not inherent in matter. The root of evil is in moral corruption and in will depravity which means that evil is the sin as a turning away from God. Considering that the human being is privileged among God's creatures, as he has the free will and became responsible for every degradation of his own nature which produces a second nature; in a corrupted state nonetheless, it is extended to external nature. According to Nunes Costa (2002), this understanding can be expanded: for understanding this issue, we must consider three premises. First, Augustine assumes that, in the universe created and governed by God, there is a gradation of values or perfections, both between God, which is the Supreme Good, and created beings, such as among beings created in relation to one another, who receive their degree of goodness by participating in that; second, among created beings, man occupies a privileged or superior place, as he is the only being that possesses reason or intelligence which makes him aware of the "divine order", and, on this account (third), he can freely choose (free will) between following it, thus contributing to the right order or disrespecting it, generating disorder represented by sin or evil. This means to say that evil appears as a guilty or sinful transgression of the divine order on the part of man.

From this perspective, evil is a moral condition that the being who freely chooses to turn away from God causes. Thereupon, it is in the will corruption, in the misuse of free will that the order break, which God established, producing the disorder caused by this perversion of the natural context. For this reason, the problem of evil in Augustine begins with the fall and original sin, which modifies the human condition, reproducing a second nature with the corruption first state. After the fall man loses control and sovereignty over himself:

Before Adam's disobedience, he had the power not to sin. His condition then was *posse non peccare*: it was possible not to sin. After the disobedience and because of it, Adam's condition and that of all his posterity except Jesus Christ

became *non posse non peccare*: not possible not to sin. (Olson, 1999, p. 172)

Therefore, sin corrupted human nature and produced in man the second nature, which is the corrupted version of the original condition. In reacting against Manichean thinking, about the origin of evil removed from matter and in the moral context, Augustine also opposes Pelagius who did not believe that sin affected man so much that he could not act freely for doing good. Receiving the work of the English monk, On Nature, the Bishop even with sympathy disagreed with the Pelagian anthropology.

Conforming to Augustine the human being has a corrupt nature and, as the fall consequences, there are conditions acquired with sin. In this perspective, if it is not for divine grace, which has the returning ability of the old splendor and perfection that man possessed before sin, man will stay in meager conditions without this precious resource and without any chance of getting rid of these conditions; he may fall of his own accord, but he cannot rise without the contest of the grace of God. Thus, Augustine considered the unhappiness in which humanity fell, due to original sin, as a just condemnation in which only through grace could it be freed, hence vehemently opposing Pelagius, who did not even accept original sin, sustaining that for men having a sinless life it only depended on them.

It is necessary to say, in view of the Augustinian work, that evil generated in human beings a new nature, which from the fall became much inferior to the original nature, which came directly from the hands of the Creator. The fall changed human nature and for Augustine, who claims to be following in the footsteps of biblical anthropology, this expanded the limitations in various spheres of human beings, which does not mean that man was not limited before original sin; however, these limits constituted the functions of its nature and delimited the reason for its creation. Coming to the fall, the limits went beyond functional issues and by causing evil to arise in the world by turning away from God, second nature took the place of the first state, creating a context where everything that was the product of humanity would be affected by this condition.

III. THE SECOND NATURE IN BLAISE PASCAL

In Augustine's view defending the scenario of the human condition, based on second nature, was essential to react against Mani's teachings view on the origin of evil; he also took the debate to the theological field of anthropology in his dialogues with Pelagius. Taking into account the problems and context differences, in the 17th century, we came across Blaise Pascal who was another

emblematic thinker and, as Augustine, positioned himself against the anthropology of his time, treating it both in the sphere of philosophy; he debated, therefore, with Cartesian philosophy in the theological field and in opposition to Molina's theology.

The 17th century is one of the periods in which Augustinian thought was resumed. Cartesian rationalism to a certain extent was influenced by Augustine's dimension of interiority directing his epistemological research to the subjectivity sphere. It culminated in the first truth of his reasons chain, namely, the cogito, a sine qua non for the universal science establishment that he intended; conforming Descartes (1989) explains in his book *Principles of philosophy*, this science would have, physics and moral as its trunk, mechanics and medicine as its branches, and metaphysics as its root. It is a fundamental point for modern western culture construction. In the fourth century, the Bishop of Hippo already indicates interiority as an instrument of searching for the truth, although with a very different purpose from the Cartesian one, since the Augustinian focus was proving the existence of God. On the other hand, in Descartes such proof is one more truth in the chain of reasons and, despite its importance, it does not even figure as an Archimedean point, as explained by Gilson (2006). For Augustine, the problem of knowledge and the problem of the existence of God are indistinguishable, in such a way that conceiving the truth and knowing the truth are part of the same issue. Indeed, Augustine turns to reason proving to himself that it is possible to prove the existence of God, for this purpose one of the obligatory passages is the certainty about his own existence. Augustine applies this point as follows:

I am most certain that I am, and that I know and delight in this. In respect of these truths, I am not at all afraid of the arguments of the Academicians, who say, What if you are deceived? For if I am deceived, I am. For he who is not, cannot be deceived; and if I am deceived, by this same token I am. And since I am if I am deceived, how am I deceived in believing that I am? for it is certain that I am if I am deceived. Since, therefore, I, the person deceived, should be, even if I were deceived, certainly I am not deceived in this knowledge that I am. And, consequently, neither am I deceived in knowing that I know. For, as I know that I am, so I know this also, that I know. And when I love these two things, I add to them a certain third thing, namely, my love, which is of equal moment. For neither am I deceived in this, that I love, since in those things which I love I am not deceived; though even if these were false, it would still be true that

I loved false things. [...] Further, as there is no one who does not wish to be happy, so there is no one who does not wish to be. For how can he be happy, if he is nothing? (Augustine, 2000, pp. 496 – 497).

For proving the certainty of his being, as a necessary journey to confirm the existence of God, which is the focus of his *démarche*, the interiority resource is used by the bishop; while Descartes uses cogito as the first truth and foundation of others, including the existence of God, all indispensable to his desired mathesis universalis.

In consideration of these differences and other differences that are beyond the aim of this article, such as the fact that in Augustine reason did not find the existence of God as in Descartes, it is possible to admit a certain influence of Augustine's thought not only on the Cartesian thought but still about other authors of great recognition in modernity. This clearly expresses the medieval thinker importance:

Descartes was not alone in embracing the Augustinian path at the beginning of the modern era. In a sense those two centuries, the sixteenth and seventeenth, can be seen as an immense flowering of Augustinian spirituality across all confessional differences, one which continued in its own way into the Enlightenment, as the case of Leibniz amply illustrates. (Taylor, 1989, p. 141).

According to Charles Taylor, as a result, every modern society comes from its origins with many important elements of Augustinian thought; and the philosopher from Hippo was one of the great providers of the modern context in the 16th and 17th century. If, on the one hand, Pascal reacts against the anthropocentric pretension of modern thought, on another hand, he uses the same source as these authors. Specifically, he also returns to Augustinian thought drawing inspiration from concepts that bases his oppositional thought, mainly, with regard to studies related to Grace that is a theme par excellence theological; he also turns to Augustine when it comes to questions of an anthropological nature, which is the moment that he investigates human nature composition, in its second state.

Luís Felipe Pondé, as demonstrating this approach, resorts to Phillippe Sellier's researches, who makes it clear that the Jansenist thinker, as Cartesian thought, also searched for bases in the African thinker in order to reach important points that led him to the most diverse questions. Pondé (2014), affirms that throughout Pascal's study, the world (matter and fallen soul) is presented as the dark face of reality. The anthropological and epistemological difficulties that torment man are nothing more than

manifestations of the human condition of living immersed in the darkness of the lustful world. Augustine, in his rich empirical-descriptive tendency, will found a vision of man that will unfold until the 20th century. Observing in the African author such man as insufficient, that is an anthropological conception, it is not difficult to understand, already in his youth, the radical Pascalian defense of Augustinism against humanist trends.

We clearly find, thus, in Pascal's thoughts similar elements of Augustine's anthropological presentation. In discussions with Pelagius, the Bishop of Hippo makes it clear that human nature entered a state of degradation due to original sin, producing a second nature and modifying, as a consequence, the human condition.

Pascal (1910, p. 137) states: "being lost, everything becomes its own nature; as the true good being lost, everything becomes its own true good". The Jansenist at this point addresses the Augustinian thought and affirms that when man loses his first nature, then he must be analyzed according to the nature that remains to him; and doing this considering the transit from theological elements to the philosophical context. Accordingly, is Pascal legitimizing such principles for the context of rationality and why did he do that? Simply because current anthropology in accordance with humanism at that time failed to represent the human condition in agreement with the facts. Through rationalism, man can be aware of all true knowledge and therefore arrive at the solution of all problems, there is nothing in nature that seems resisting geometry. However:

He was thus led to make that fundamental distinction between the "geometrical spirit" and the "acute or subtle spirit." The geometrical spirit excels in all these subjects that are capable of a perfect analysis - that may be divided into their first elements. It starts with certain axioms and from them it draws inferences the truth of which can be demonstrated by universal logical rules. The advantage of this spirit consists in the clarity of its principles and in the necessity of its deductions. But not all objects are capable of such treatment. There are things which because of their subtlety and their infinite variety defy every attempt at logical analysis. And if there is anything in the world that we have to treat in this second way, it is the mind of man. What characterizes man is the richness and subtlety, the variety and versatility of his nature. Hence mathematics can never become the instrument of a true doctrine of man, of a philosophical anthropology. (Cassirer, 1944, p. 32).

The active reason is not enough for meeting all needs, as it configures itself as a faculty of second nature and everything that it measures by its criteria finds the limits of its application. Hence, anthropology based on rationalism, namely, on the scientific spirit, does not find legitimacy in Pascal for the study of the human condition.

The rationalists' analysis would content themselves with empirical data which human nature offers; this is transmitted by characteristics, as the finitude and as the contradiction, that they did not have any interest. Instead, they based themselves on metaphysical principles for analyzing metaphysical questions and somehow introduce such questions into the empirical world. However, Pascal uses such data for applying the concept of second nature, since he thinks about the human condition in an unworkable and perishable context. It is due to this space of finitude and of contradiction that Pascal chooses the second nature concept as the principle of the human condition which is a condition assumed after the fall.

It is from this perspective that Pascal considers the human condition. Customs, morals, politics, even knowledge productions are within the context of second nature. Everything related to the first nature condition was lost with the fall. Thus, the temporal, contradictory, and finite character of both society and human productions, as well as the human condition itself, provided a foundation for Pascal using categories of theological order, due to its applicability to the historical-spatial condition of man, therefore, as Pascal wrote (1910, p. 41): "There is nothing he may not make natural; there is nothing natural he may not lose".

Since nothing social is based on something really natural, Pascal considers that all these applications are within a randomness infinity, according to the imagination of those who run society; and then the Jansenist reflects:

You have no right to it of yourself and by your own nature any more than he: and not only do you find yourself the son of a duke, but also do you find yourself the son of a duke, but also do you find yourself in the world at all, only through an infinity of chances. Your birth depends on a marriage, or rather on the marriages of all those from whom you descend. But upon what do these marriages depend? A visit made by chance, an idle word, a thousand unforeseen occasions. (Pascal, 1910, p. 378)

Pascal ponders that such human condition is similar to a man who was thrown by a storm on an unknown island, where its natives were worried about finding their lost king and this man had similarities to the island's monarch. After hesitating, he accepts such luck receiving all the privileges a king should receive. In his reflections yet, he could not

forget his true state in which he was actually a castaway and was not the king of that people; even speaking as a king and acting as such but for maintaining his privileges he concealed the truth of the people while treating everyone according to his appearance.

Every power, privilege, or social condition is not based on nature, but on laws based on a chain of contingencies and on the fantasies that make the law. Considering this, Pascal demonstrates that everything established in the second human nature is also in this context of infinite chance. Therefore:

The two principles of truth, reason and senses, are not only both not genuine, but are engaged in mutual deception. The senses deceive reason through false appearances, and, just as they trick the soul, they are tricked by it in their turn: it takes its revenge. The senses are disturbed by passions, which produce false impressions. They both compete in lies and deception. (Pascal, 1995, p. 46)

Consequently, Pascal invites man for reflecting on his own condition, as knowing about the truth of himself is already considered as a demonstration of greatness, since “man’s greatness comes from knowing he is wretched: a tree does not know it is wretched. Thus, it is wretched to know that one is wretched, but there is greatness in knowing one is wretched.” (Pascal, 1995, p. 65). Such greatness, as demonstrated, allows us to notice misery as the foundation of the human constitution.

The Jansenist then establishes, as demonstrating the human nature condition, his apologetic work on the Christian religion, showing that, unlike other religions and as the current humanist thought from that time, the Christian religion was the only one demonstrating its nature reality, and, therefore, it has truths accessible only by faith which must be considered, in other words, the full knowledge of oneself and the knowledge of God. About this Pascal said:

It is truly glorious for religion to have such unreasonable men as enemies: their opposition represents so small a danger that it serves on the contrary to establish the truths of religion. For the Christian faith consists almost wholly in establishing these two things: The corruption of nature and the redemption of Christ. Now, I maintain that, if they do not serve to prove the truth of the redemption by the sanctity of their conduct, they do at least admirably serve to prove the corruption of nature by such unnatural sentiments. (1995, p. 173).

Pascal also states that this other source of knowledge, that is present in man, is the heart which is the place that, if well directed, is led by true faith and it has the ability to feel God and access knowledge that is inaccessible to reason, since “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know” (Pascal, 1910, p. 98). Then, there are the following reasons of heart:

It is the heart which perceives God and not the reason. That is what faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by the reason. [...] Faith is a gift of God. Do not imagine that we describe it as a gift of reason. Other religions do not say that about their faith. They offered nothing but reason as a way to faith, and yet it does not lead there. (Pascal, 1995, pp. 169 – 245)

Therefore, in Pascal faith is important for man knowing beyond what he could know by reason alone. As Augustine combines faith and reason for man can reach the interior of himself, the knowledge of himself, and the truth and God. Pascal makes use of a similar resource for combating the humanist pretension and defending the foundations of the Christian religion, as well as its usefulness to man.

IV. CONCLUSION

Augustine and Pascal, each within their time context, both through faith and reason for presenting their anthropology based on the Christian perspective. Each of these authors provided a vast amount of culture and knowledge in their respective contexts. The Bishop of Hippo talks about the items of faith through reason, while dealing with rational issues within the context of faith. He does this in a conciliatory manner, avoiding falling both into rationalism and fideism. Pascal is also an expert in the issues that most define the 17th century and rejects falling into the tricks of fideism, skepticism, as well as rationalism in its extremes; following in the footsteps of Augustine, he reaffirms the place of faith along the reason for presenting anthropology that was in accordance with the facts of reality and that did not tend only to reason pretensions or to the testimonies of the senses.

Both Augustinian and Pascalian anthropology start from the narrative of the fall for supporting the human condition context. The human actuality nature stems from the change suffered by original sin, a problem of a moral order that underlies the cause of evil and the loss of the first nature, as well as adherence to fallen nature for both authors. According to Sellier (1995, p. 232) Pascal and Augustine, therefore, when dealing with original sin appeal to the Evangelical Tradition, in other words, to Scripture, to the way it was understood in the different

stages of the Church's life, and to the liturgy. But this Tradition explains a state of affairs, it does not create it. Then, it is clear that the Augustinian theologian could turn from an empirical consideration of the present state of man to his theological explanation.

It is in this way that Pascal maintains a constant flow between theological and philosophical discourse, reconciling faith and reason, valuing both the items of faith and the prepositions of reason. However, since the empirical data correspond much more with the narrative of the Christian faith than the pretensions of humanist reason in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Jansenist then, following in the footsteps of Augustine:

The opposition greatness/misery is very traditional. No doubt, in Pascal it achieves its extreme form, but, at the same time, he brings it to its final moment. In any case, even if his thought appears to have considerable force, Pascal is not an original thinker in this case; on the contrary, Pascal does not pretend to do anything but reactualize Saint Augustine's *De vera religione*, which is his model. (Carraud, 2005, p. 543)

Nonetheless, Pascal's thought, even starting from the Augustinian position, could not be closed within the limits of this thought. Rethinking human nature made it possible for the amplified Pascalian understanding. Sellier (1995) considers that Pascal also surpassed the Bishop of Hippo in painting the psychological inconstancy of the human being. Not only is man just a toy among the elements, but he himself is fleeing and changing. These are variations according to time, place, temperament as others.

In the second nature, both Augustine and Pascal present a man who could be identified within a rational discourse without conflicting with the revelations of faith, especially, it is only in this way that making anthropology becomes possible for these authors. Man's actuality is the result of abandoning his first condition and from a perfect being, created by God. Man passes to a state of finitude, subject to the determinations of time and history which in themselves are the manifestations of this second state.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Authors thank the support of Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel – Brazil (CAPES) – Code Finance 001, as well as the Foundation for the Support of Research and Scientific and Technological Development of Maranhão (FAPEMA) - Universal/Edital n° 02/2018.

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